

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

**SELECTION
TECHNIQUES**

AND

**INTERVIEWING
GUIDE**

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SELECTION TECHNIQUES AND INTERVIEWING GUIDE

Hiring and promoting the best employees are among the most important of all supervisory duties. No time is better spent than interviewing properly and conducting reference checks. These duties will not involve nearly as much time as dealing with the consequences of poor personnel selection (conflict, stress, bad morale, low productivity, disciplinary actions, etc.)

Because interviewing is one of the significant phases of the hiring process, it is important that applicants have an equal opportunity for employment at this level. The interview is intended to predict job performance. However, as important as the interview is, it is only a tool and should not be the sole basis on which a selection is made. It is possible that the best candidate may not have the best interview.

A well-written, comprehensive job description is one of the interviewer's best tools. The interview should be focused on the position's duties and what will be expected of the employee. The job description should be given to each candidate to read either before the interview or at the beginning of the interview.

The same interview questions must be asked of all applicants interviewing for the same position. You may want to develop an interview/rating form to assist you with the interview and rating that includes questions and options to rate each interviewee (Superior, Very Good, Average, Below Average, Poor) which should be completed for each person interviewed, thereby, ensuring the same questions are asked of each interviewee. Be sure to include the applicant's name on your form as well as information about the position such as, Vacant Job Title, Position Number, Office, Location, Pay Level, Minimum, Midpoint, Maximum, Special Entrance Rates (if applicable), Interviewer and Date of interview.

It is also recommended, when feasible, to use three or more interviewers. Be sure they understand their responsibilities. Choose interviewers for the panel with a concern for a balance of experience and background.

Give yourself ample time for each interview. Adequately document statements made by the applicant that are job-related. Indicate to the applicants that they will be notified after a selection has been made

PRE-INTERVIEW AND TRANSITION PERIOD

1. Study the mandatory position requirements, position description, and performance standards.
2. Study the candidate's application, especially previous experience. Determine if the candidate is currently working. You will need to know this to appropriately ask some of the questions.

3. Know the salary range, and familiarize yourself with salary minimum for the position based on applicant's qualifications. Do not quote a salary higher than the minimum of the range without consulting first with the Human Resource Office.
4. Choose a comfortable and relaxed area to conduct the interview, making prior arrangements to eliminate or minimize interruptions.
5. Provide a copy of the job description to the applicant to read while waiting for the interview to begin.
6. Greet the applicants with a smile and by name. Thank the applicant for coming and begin the conversation by asking a question:

“Can I get you anything to drink this morning?”
“Did you have any trouble locating our office?”
7. Inform the applicant that you will be taking notes during the interview and that the interview process will be the same for each applicant. Allow silence after questions. Give the applicant time to think.
8. Tell the applicant about the structure of the Department including how the job fits into the organization.
9. Make a transitional statement to begin the interview, such as: “Before getting into the job requirements, let's discuss your employment background.”
10. **You should never ask the old fashioned icebreaker question, “Tell me about yourself”, as the applicant may inform you of personal information that may be used in a discrimination claim if the applicant is not selected for the job.**
11. Only ask what you need to know as it pertains to the job.
12. **Keep all questions job related.**
13. **Caution: If a candidate volunteers personal information which is not job related, immediately stop them and tell them that such information has no bearing on the job and will not be considered in the hiring decision.**

The following are sample questions you may wish to use. Feel free to add more job related questions. However, you must ask the same questions to **all** candidates.

APPLICANT BACKGROUND

1. Tell me about your current or last job.
2. Describe the most and least enjoyable parts of the job.
3. How do you account for the successes you have had in this position and others?
4. Why did you leave your last position? Or why would you leave this position?

5. Has your supervisor ever talked to you about your performance either positively or negatively and what did your supervisor say?
6. Have you ever received a “Needs Improvement”, “Poor” or “Unsatisfactory” performance evaluation within the last 5 years? If so, for what reasons?
7. How do you feel about the people with whom you have worked in the past or at present?
8. Explain anything about your previous or current company or department that you do not like or agree with.
9. Describe your education.
10. What subjects did you like in school and why did you like them?
11. How did your education prepare you to do your current job?
12. What supervisory experience have you had?
13. What experience have you had in the area of conflict resolution?
14. Are you proficient in Microsoft Word and Excel? What other software do you use?
15. If selected for this job, can you provide verification of your right to work in the U.S? (Social Security card, drivers’ license, birth certificate, Alien Registration Card with photo, etc.)
16. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? (The seriousness of the crime must be taken into consideration.)
17. What is the funniest thing that ever happened to you on the job?

APPLICANT BEHAVIOR

Ask questions to determine how the applicant would most likely handle a situation such as those shown in the parenthesis:

1. (hard work) Tell me about a time when a situation developed requiring extra effort and hours to get the job done. What happened and how did you handle it?
2. (difficult person) Recall a time when you had to provide service to an insistent, arrogant, rude customer, employee, or caller. How did you accomplish your mission?
3. (leadership) Give an example of a time when you coached an employee or a work team to take positive action, complete a task, or achieve a goal.
4. (pressure/stress) How do you react during a high pressure situation. What happens to your attitude and demeanor?
5. (decisiveness) Describe a work situation when you had to make an immediate decision and take action.

6. (details) Do you find it useful to prepare detailed checklists or procedures to reduce the potential for error? Tell me about a checklist or procedure you have developed.
7. (tact and diplomacy) Tell me about a time when you had to deliver bad news to someone in a work situation.
8. (organizational skills) Tell me how you organize your work on a typical work day.

POSITION, CAREER TRACK, AND SALARY

Discuss the position description and the results expected (standards). Provide a copy of the job description for the applicant to read and reference while you are talking if the applicant was not given a copy while waiting for the interview. (Take handouts back when finished.)

1. Now that I have described the job in detail, what do you think of it?
2. Can you perform the tasks described? **ADA consideration:** If there is concern through physical observation that the applicant may not be able to perform a task, ask the candidate to tell or demonstrate “how” he can perform the task, with or without reasonable accommodation.
3. Would you have any trouble with the prescribed working hours or with periodic overtime?
4. Describe any experience you have had that you feel is qualifying for this job.
5. Who can we talk to for more information about your job performance?

Caution: Contacting applicant’s current employer without permission could put the applicant’s job in jeopardy. (Ask candidate to contact references within 24 hours and call you back with current telephone numbers. Also, candidate should tell references you will be calling. This should help with collecting information on the reference checks.)

6. Do you have the licenses and certificates necessary to do the job (only if applicable)?
Valid La. Drivers license? _____ Other _____
7. Are you willing and able to travel if required?
8. Discuss the career path for the job. (Be careful not to make promises on career progression since advancement is dependent on performance.)
9. Discuss the normal minimum salary, if appropriate, and Pay level.
10. Discuss the probationary period, permanent status, and how annual merit increases are considered on the employee’s anniversary date.
11. Discuss performance planning and review.
12. Why should we hire you for this position?

CLOSING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Progress to closing the interview after completing the necessary questions above.

1. Do you have any final questions about what I have said so far?
2. What, if any, are your reservations about accepting this position, if it is offered?
3. When would you be available to begin work?
4. State specifically what action(s) will take place next in the hiring process and the approximate time Human Resources or the agency will be getting back to the applicant. For example:

“It will take us a few days to conduct other interviews and check your references; so you probably will not be contacted until late next week (or other estimated time).”
5. Thank the applicant for coming to the interview.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT INQUIRIES/INTERVIEWS UNDER EEO GUIDELINES

In order to avoid discrimination in the interview, you should be familiar with acceptable and unacceptable questions. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, is a Federal Law which prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Title VII is administered and enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) who has issued guidelines which are and are not acceptable under the law. Please refer to the following acceptable and unacceptable questions before conducting pre-employment inquiries/interviews.

(This list does not cover every possible discriminatory question, but some common ones.)

SUBJECT: Name

Acceptable: Have you ever used another name?
Is any additional information relative to change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname necessary to enable a check on your work and education record? If yes, please explain.

Unacceptable: What is your maiden name?

SUBJECT: Residence

Acceptable: What is your address?

Unacceptable: Do you rent or own your home?

SUBJECT: Age

Acceptable: A statement that being hired is subject to verification that applicant meets legal age requirements.

If hired, can you show proof of age?
Are you over eighteen years of age?
If under eighteen, after employment, can you submit a work permit?

Unacceptable: What is your age?
When were you born?
What are the dates of completion or attendance of elementary or high school?
Questions which tend to identify applicant over age 40.

SUBJECT: Birthplace, Citizenship

Acceptable: Can you, after employment, submit verification or right to work in the U.S.?

Unacceptable: Questions about the birthplace of applicant, applicant's parents, spouse or other relatives.
Are you a U.S. Citizen?
What is the citizenship of parents, spouse, or other relatives?
It is also unacceptable to require that the applicant furnish naturalization papers or alien card prior to employment.

SUBJECT: National Origin

Acceptable: Languages which an applicant reads, speaks or writes, IF use of language other than English is relevant to the job for which the applicant is applying.

Unacceptable: Questions as to lineage, ancestry, national origin, nationality, descent or parentage of applicant, applicant's parents or spouse.
What is your mother tongue?
What language do you commonly use? Or anything such as "Kowalski....that's Polish, isn't it?"
Have you had your name changed by court order?
How did you acquire the ability to speak a foreign language?

SUBJECT: Sex, Marital Status, Family

Acceptable: Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor.
Statement of department policy regarding work assignment of employees who are related.

Unacceptable: Questions which indicate applicant's sex or marital status.
Should I call you Mrs., Miss or Ms.?
Are you married? What is your maiden name?
How many children do you have?
Who takes care of your children while you are working?
What does your husband think about you working outside the home?
Do you live with your parents?
Are you living with your husband/wife?
How many children /dependents do you have?
How old are your children?
Questions regarding pregnancy, child bearing or birth control.
Name or address of relative, spouse of children of adult applicant.

SUBJECT: Race, Color

Acceptable: None

Unacceptable: Any questions regarding applicant's race, color, complexion, color of hair, eyes or skin.

SUBJECT: Physical Description, Photograph

Acceptable: Statement that photograph may be required after employment.

Unacceptable: Questions about an applicant's height and weight.
Request that an applicant affix photograph to application.
Request applicant, at his/her option, to submit a photograph.
Request a photograph after the interview, but before employment.

SUBJECT: Physical Condition, Handicap

Acceptable: Statement that offer of employment may be made subject to applicant passing a job related physical examination.
Can you perform the tasks for the job to which you applied with or without an accommodation(s)?

Unacceptable: Questions regarding applicant's general medical condition, state of health or illnesses.
Questions regarding receipt of Worker's Compensation.
Do you have any handicap or physical disabilities?

SUBJECT: Religion

Acceptable: Statement by employer of regular days, hours or shifts to be worked.

Unacceptable: Questions regarding religion or religious days observed.
Does your religion prevent you from working weekends or holidays?

SUBJECT: Arrest, Criminal Record

Acceptable: Have you ever been convicted of a felony? (Such a question must be accompanied by a statement that a conviction will not necessarily disqualify an applicant from employment).

Unacceptable: Have you ever been arrested?

SUBJECT: Organizations, Activities

Acceptable: Please list job related organizations, clubs, professional societies or other associations to which you belong - - you may omit those which indicate your race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex or age.

Unacceptable: List all organizations, clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong.

SUBJECT: References

Acceptable: By whom were you referred for a position here?
Names of persons willing to provide professional and/or character references for applicant.

Unacceptable: Questions of applicant's former employers or acquaintances which elicit information specifying the applicant's race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, physical handicap, medical condition or marital status.

RATINGS

Once the above process has been completed, the rating instrument with the highest score indicates the individual who has the best skills, knowledges, abilities, etc. for the position to be filled. It should be noted that when group and/or committee interviews occur, the rating of all members should be added together to give you a grand total.

Statistics have proven that selecting the best candidate for a position reduces turnover, reduces absenteeism and increases productivity.

REFERENCE CHECKS

Before the selection of any candidate, reference checks should always be completed. In addition to the Civil Service application and the interview process, the reference check will provide you with information that you may not normally have been able to obtain and which is vital to the rating of the prospective applicant. Listed below are the types of information normally obtained during this process. These require “yes” or “no” answers and are objective public record. They do not involve subjective personal opinion.

1. Dates of employment with former agency or office.
2. Duties the applicant performed.
3. Ask the previous employer for specific information regarding the applicant’s performance, quality and quantity of work.
4. Former earnings.
5. Reason for leaving
6. Ability to get along with other people.
7. Any comments regarding:
 - Attendance
 - Dependability
 - Ability to take on responsibilities
 - Degree of supervision needed
 - General attitude toward work
8. Has the candidate received an Unsatisfactory or “Needs Improvement” service rating within the last 5 years? (Don’t tell reasons why when giving the reference.)
9. Had his/her merit increase been withheld (other than for layoff avoidance) during the last 5 years? (Don’t tell reasons why when giving the reference)
10. Has he/she received any disciplinary actions in the last 5 years? For what?
11. Has he/she ever been terminated in the last 5 years from a job for cause, including separation under Rule 9.1(e), for failing to meet the standards of the probational period?
12. Ask if they would rehire this person if they had the opportunity.

PROVIDING REFERENCE INFORMATION/EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATIONS:

It is strongly recommended that you contact the Human Resources Management Office or the Office of Legal Affairs before providing any negative reference information on an employee/former employee. All requests for employment verification such as dates of employment, job title, salary, leave balances, etc., shall be referred to the Human Resources Management Office. However, requests for job performance of an employee/former employee should be provided by the immediate supervisor (or a higher level manager in the

employee's/former employee's chain of command) as they have first hand knowledge of the employee's/former employee's job performance. Use extreme caution when giving references in the following situations (or as mentioned above, contact Human Resources or the Office of Legal Affairs prior to providing reference information):

1. Giving non-job related information.
2. Volunteering information that is not specifically requested.
3. Giving information for which you do not have first-hand knowledge. Examples: *"I heard that he had serious attendance problems."* Or *"I never actually supervised him, but this report by his previous supervisor says he had problems."*
4. Giving subjective information without specific, job-related, truthful, documented information to support it. Examples: *"I would not rehire this person."* *"This person has an attitude problem."* If you make statements of this nature, you should say why you feel this way. For example, if you say you would not rehire the person, reasons might be as follows: She was frequently tardy and often did not meet work deadlines.

OTHER

In addition to the Civil Service application, the interview, and the reference checks, other means may be utilized to determine whether a candidate has particular skills, etc, required of a job.

Some examples include giving a typing test to verify the words per minute an applicant can type, having applicants write a descriptive paragraph, etc. should good writing skills be required, requiring an analysis of a case history, etc, etc. The only rule of thumb is that all requirements be job related.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

1. Notify the applicant to be hired/promoted, AFTER all departmental approvals have been obtained.
2. Immediately inform those interviewed by not hired/promoted. A memo or letter may be issued saying, *"We wish to notify you that you were not selected for the position of _____; however, we thank you for your interest in applying for this position and we wish you well in your future employment (or promotion) efforts."* Do not say you hired a more qualified person or otherwise attempt to explain your action. Do not give them an opportunity to challenge you. If a candidate asks you why he/she did not get the job, simply say someone else was selected. You may wish to make the diplomatic statement that it was a really difficult choice because the candidates were good, but someone else was selected.
3. You are not required to give either verbal or written reasons for your choice. You are not required to give candidates the documentation from the structured

interviews; however, if they file an EEO suit, the EEOC may be able to subpoena this information.

4. Never make negative statements to candidates about other candidates. This could get back to them and could result in challenges.